



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

Executives of defunct California bus company plead guilty charges stemming from company's role in massive human smuggling scheme

TUCSON – Several top-level executives of a now defunct Southern California bus company have pleaded guilty to federal charges stemming from the company's role in a human smuggling scheme responsible for bringing more than 40,000 illegal aliens from Tucson to the Los Angeles area during a two-year period.

Gustavo Arellano-Ibarra, the former manager of Golden State Transportation Company's Phoenix terminal, was sentenced to 53 months and nine days in prison. The 36-year-old Phoenix resident pleaded guilty to two felony counts of harboring and transporting illegal aliens for financial gain. Arellano-Ibarra admitted that, during a three-year period beginning in 1998, he used the company's facilities to transport hundreds of illegal aliens. Arellano-Ibarra, an illegal alien himself, also faces deportation upon completion of his sentence.

The plea and sentencing stem from a multi-agency investigation involving U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and Border Protection Border Patrol, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General.

"The corrupt business model for the Golden State Transportation Company was dependent on the criminal smuggling of thousands of illegal aliens into the United States," said Julie L. Myers, Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "The success of this investigation sends a strong message that the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security are committed to dismantling criminal organizations involved in human smuggling. ICE is focused on targeting the infrastructure and networks that support this illegal activity in our communities."

Also this week, the founder and former vice president of operations for Golden State pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the fraudulent use of a Social Security number. Francisco Gonzalez, 63, was sentenced to 12 months of supervised probation and ordered to perform 150 hours of community service.

Four other former Golden State executives also pleaded guilty this month to criminal charges related to the investigation. Antonio Gonzalez, 43, the former president of Golden State, pleaded guilty to being an accessory to transporting an illegal alien and engaging in a pattern and practice of continuing to employ an illegal alien. He was sentenced to 12 months supervised probation and ordered to perform 200 hours of community service.

In addition, Enrique Gonzalez, 39, Ismael Gonzalez, 35, and Irene Coronado, 33, entered guilty pleas to engaging in a pattern and practice of continuing to employ an illegal alien. Each of these defendants has been given six months to complete 100 hours community service. If successful, the charges against them will be dismissed.

This case was initially indicted in 2001. Named in the original indictment were the corporation - Golden State Transportation, several family members who owned and controlled the company, and approximately 30 other defendants, including terminal managers, Golden State employees, and alien smugglers from Los Angeles and southern Arizona.

Each defendant was charged with conspiracy to commit alien smuggling, bringing in, harboring, and transporting aliens through the bus company. Subsequent superseding indictments added money laundering and other charges. The government also sought criminal forfeiture of the company's assets. The district court case had been stayed since December 2003 pending the decision of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the suppression of wiretap evidence.

Previously, Golden State pleaded guilty to the conspiracy and several alien smuggling felonies as well as money laundering charges. The company agreed to forfeit its new \$2.5 million Phoenix bus terminal, which was slated to open in early 2002. The company also forfeited more than \$100,000 cash seized during the execution of search warrants related to the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.